

TOWN OF SEEKONK

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN

AND MASTER PLAN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ELEMENT



2019

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SEEKONK

MASSACHUSETTS



Executive Summary and Three Main Goals

What does “economic development planning” mean for the town of Seekonk?

Like communities all across Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and the United States, Seekonk is seeking prosperity and fiscal health. One of the main tools for achieving these goals is *economic development* - the pursuit of high value business growth and stability through public policies and investments. This plan is an effort to organize and guide Seekonk’s economic development decisions by basing them on current and accurate data, clear and commonsense goals, and workable strategies for implementation. The document, itself, seeks to be concise, interactive (containing several web-based components), and user-friendly. It acknowledges that there isn’t one “silver bullet” strategy; rather, this plan presents a variety of initiatives that, when taken together, can assist Seekonk in its efforts to bring business growth to town. These strategies are summarized in a simple “**Implementation Matrix**,” available at <https://XXXX> and in the **Appendix**.

What does the data say about Seekonk’s economy?

A survey of over a dozen annotated data sets concerning Seekonk’s population, local economy, housing market, and taxes are available in this document’s **Appendix** and online at www.srpedd.org/Seekonk-ED-Data. Consulting the data on the web page allows the reader to sort, “mouse over,” and otherwise interact with and explore the information. For the purposes of this “hard copy” document, the main take-away messages from the 2018 data survey are:

- **Seekonk is growing.** Its population has increased faster than that of Metro Providence (which includes all of RI and Bristol County, MA). That growth is projected to continue into

the near future - however, at a slightly slower rate than MA, as a whole.

- Relative to Metro Providence and to MA, as a whole, **Seekonk has an older population.** Moreover, its median age has increased by over ten years since 1990, from 36.1 to 46.3 (in 2017).
- Compared to Metro Providence and to MA, **Seekonk is an affluent community** in terms of median household incomes.
- **Seekonk’s home prices have typically been lower than MA and the region and higher than Bristol County.** Measures of housing affordability and trends in home prices can provide insight into a community’s attractiveness and competitiveness relative to its region and neighbors.
- **Seekonk’s population is well educated compared to the region.** The town has a high share of residents with “Higher Levels” of education (Bachelor’s Degree or more) when compared to Metro Providence, but a lower share than MA.
- At 4.1%, **Seekonk’s Unemployment Rate is lower than Metro Providence** (4.5%) and MA (5.0%).
- In terms of taxes, **Seekonk has one of the highest Commercial tax rates in the region** (at \$28.32 per \$1,000 of value). It also has one of the largest “splits” (\$14.86) between commercial and residential millage rates.
- Thanks to its relatively high Commercial tax rate, **Seekonk has a fairly diversified tax base compared to neighboring communities.** Its Residential tax base is only 59%, whereas its Commercial/Industrial base is 34%.

- In terms of Location Quotient (LQ) and relative to Metro Providence, ***Seekonk has a concentration of employment in the Retail Trade, Accommodation & Food Services, and Transportation & Warehousing.***ⁱ
- Industries with high LQs are typically “export” industries, meaning that they bring economic activity into town (instead of simply circulating money and resources that are already in town, as is typically the case with Retail and Service industries, except where otherwise indicated in Retail Market Analysis [see below]). From this perspective, the town’s most important industries are those with both high LQs (indicating that they are highly concentrated) and those with a high share of the town’s overall employment. Policy makers should monitor trends in both overall employment and LQ in these industries. For example, ***in Seekonk from 2001 - 2016, the Construction, Retail Trade, Transportation and Warehousing, and Accommodation and Food Services industries were all fairly sizable (in terms of their share of total employment in Seekonk), relatively concentrated (LQs >1), and growing (in terms of both their share of overall employment in town and in LQ [with the exception of Accommodation and Food Services, which grew, but did so at much slower rate than in MA, resulting in a reduction of its LQ over the period]).***
- ***Seekonk has a healthy retail sector.*** An analysis of Seekonk’s Retail Marketplace allows a

ⁱ Location Quotient (LQ) Analysis is a way to understand how Seekonk’s employment patterns compare to those of a larger region - in this case both Metro Providence and the state of MA. LQ is basically a ratio, where, if an industry’s LQ is greater than one (>1), Seekonk has a higher share of jobs in that industry than its surrounding region. For example, Seekonk’s LQ with Metro Providence in “Retail Trade” is 2.4 (or 32.4% divided by 13.3%). This indicates that Retail as an industry is roughly two-and-a-half times more concentrated in Seekonk than it is in the surrounding region. This finding, along with Accommodation and Food Services, at an LQ of 2.1, corresponds with the predominance of retail and dining establishments the town’s list of the town’s top employers from the MA Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development (EOLWD), available at http://lmi2.detma.org/lmi/Top_employer_list.asp?gstfips=25&areatype=05&gCountyCode=000466.

“deeper dive” into the important role that retail plays in town. This analysis examines detailed types of establishments and how they perform relative to typical market expectations. Retail “Demand,” estimated in current dollars, is the amount expected to be spent by consumers at establishments in Seekonk. “Supply” estimates actual retail sales to consumers (excluding businesses) by establishments in Seekonk. The Retail Gap is a measure of the relationship between Seekonk’s “Supply” and “Demand,” where a negative number indicates a surplus of retail sales - in other words, where customers come to shop in Seekonk from outside of town. Positive numbers indicate “leakage” of retail opportunity - in other words, where Seekonk residents would leave town to shop or dine. ***Seekonk’s retail strength is clearly visible in the data, where expected demand is exceeded by actual supply in almost every detailed retail category.***

What main economic development goals do the data and local decision-makers help to identify?

Seekonk’s Economic Development Committee, Planning Board, and Town Planner reviewed and synthesized the preceding data take-aways along with other information from the **Appendix** and web page. In so doing, they identified three main Goals to be addressed by this plan:

- ***Goal 1: Protect and diversify Seekonk’s successful Route 6 retail corridor*** - On one hand, an over-dependence on the retail sector can limit high quality jobs in town and can leave Seekonk vulnerable to fluctuations in the broader economy. On the other hand, many communities would love to have a successful retail corridor, such as Route 6, and a relatively broad commercial tax base. The plan should identify strategies to diversify and protect Seekonk’s existing retail sector.



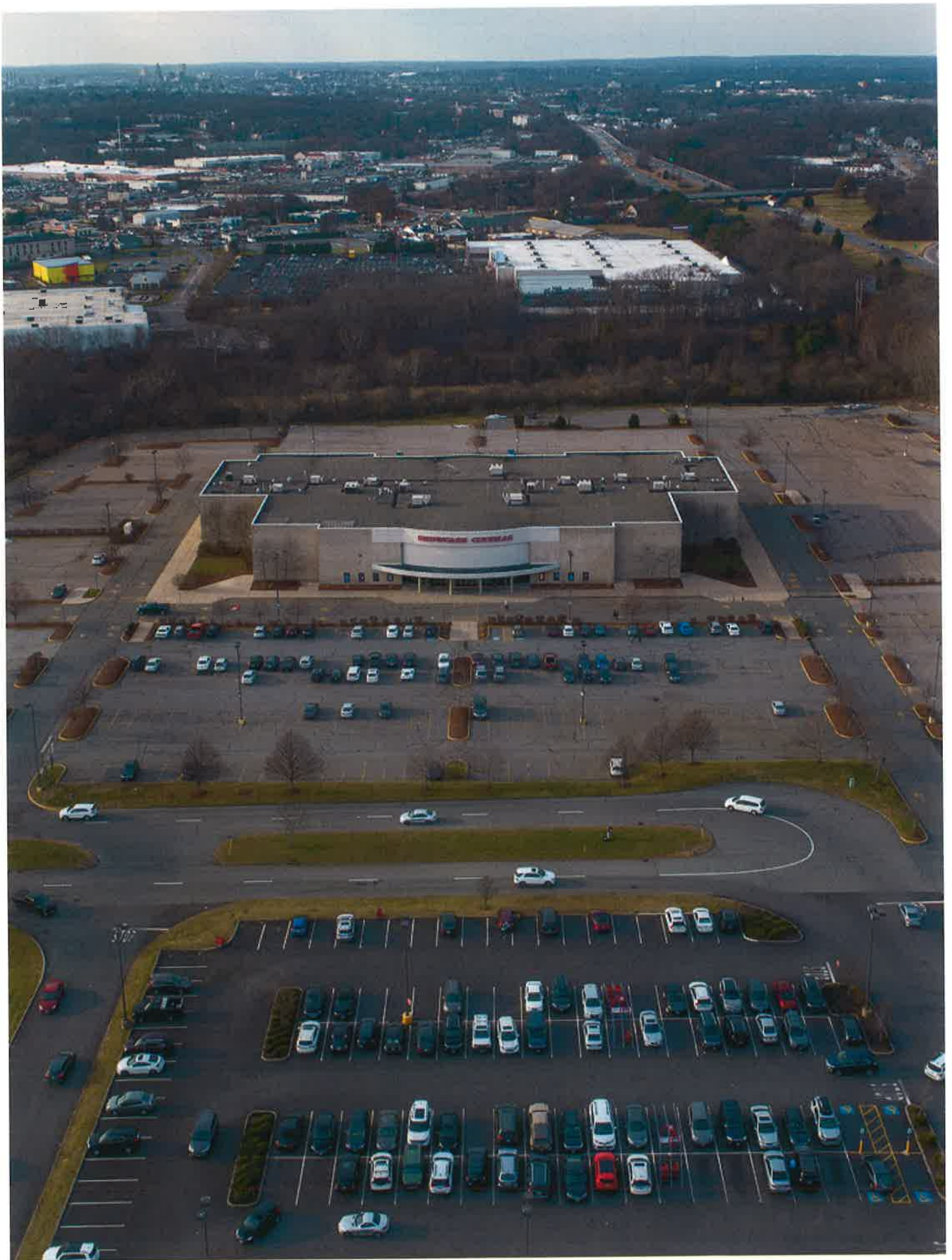
The Showcase Cinema Site in Seekonk Square provides opportunities both to diversify the retail corridor (Goal 1) and pursue office park development (Goal 2).

- **Goal 2: Pursue high-value office park development in key locations in town** - Because it has limited vacant/underutilized commercial land and few redevelopment opportunities, the Town must be strategic in its pursuit of true economic development. This plan will identify those key locations and strategies for transforming them - including state program participation and intermunicipal (and interstate) agreements to bring wastewater infrastructure to the Route 6 corridor.
- **Goal 3: Encourage mixed-use development of Luther's and Baker's Corners** - As a suburban community next to a large city, Seekonk lacks a true "downtown" or a traditional "town center." That said, Baker's Corner and Luther's Corner provide opportunities to attract younger, well educated residents to a walkable,

compact neighborhood node that provides a mix of housing types. Seekonk should encourage mixed-use growth in these areas in order to build on and reinforce the existing socioeconomic strengths in town.

Moving Forward

The remainder of this document will address each of the three main goals individually. Each section will reestablish some of the main data points, add other mapping, site visit, or drone survey information, and identify strategies for success. The plan's **Implementation Matrix** provides a final guide for moving forward.



Goal 1: Protect and diversify Seekonk's successful Route 6 retail corridor.

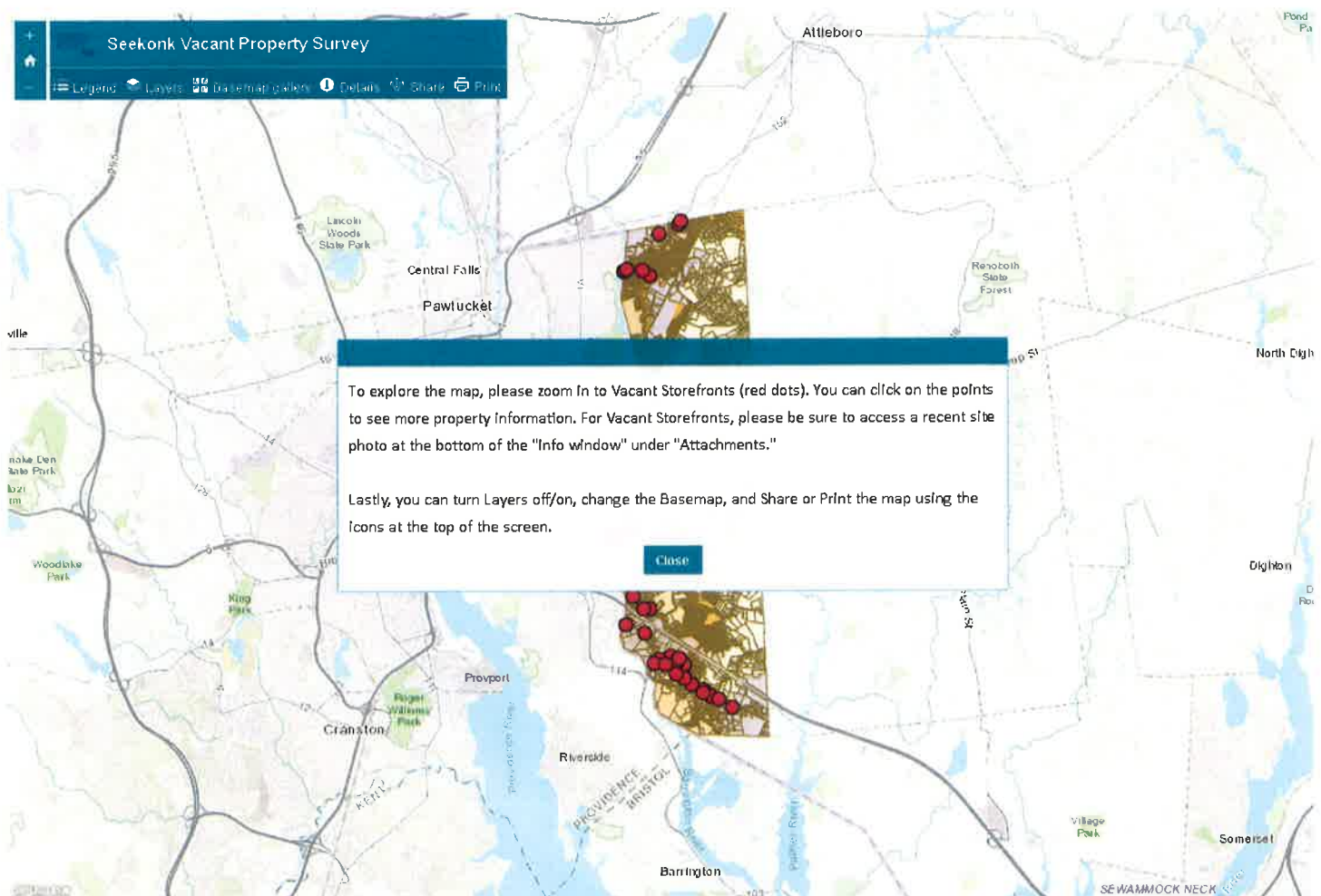
Strategy 1-1: Create and maintain a vacant storefront database to monitor and market sites.

As the Retail Market analysis established (available in the [Appendix](#) or online at www.srpedd.org/Seekonk-ED-Data), Seekonk's Retail Trade and Accommodation and Food Services sectors are healthy. These businesses are concentrated on Route 6, in the town's successful commercial corridor. They also serve as the foundation for the town's relatively broad tax base.

One way to protect and support this sector - along Route 6 and town-wide - is to know exactly when

and where vacancies occur. The town can then effectively market those sites and troubleshoot any issues that are causing frequent turnover or long-term vacancies.

As part of this Economic Development Plan, Seekonk created an interactive Vacant Property/Storefront map and database available at <https://arcg.is/1riTXr>. A screenshot of this interactive resource is available below. Moving forward, the town can maintain this database - either with staff time or through SRPEDD's free Municipal Assistance Program - ideally, updating it quarterly with a windshield survey.



Seekonk's Vacant Property/Storefront Survey includes site photos and information such as former tenant, property condition, real estate broker, owner, zoning, assessed values, and other key information. Updating this database on a quarterly basis will help the Town address vacancies in its important retail corridors.

Strategy 1-2: Conduct further parking surveys of retail centers to inform infill development and zoning changes.

On Saturday, December 1, 2018 and Saturday, March 30, 2019, the town conducted a parking survey of the “Seekonk Square” and Walmart retail developments on Route 6. Thanks to a small Unmanned Aerial System (sUAS - also known as a “drone”), the survey captured imagery of parking demand at a peak period (a Saturday in the December shopping season) and a non-peak period.

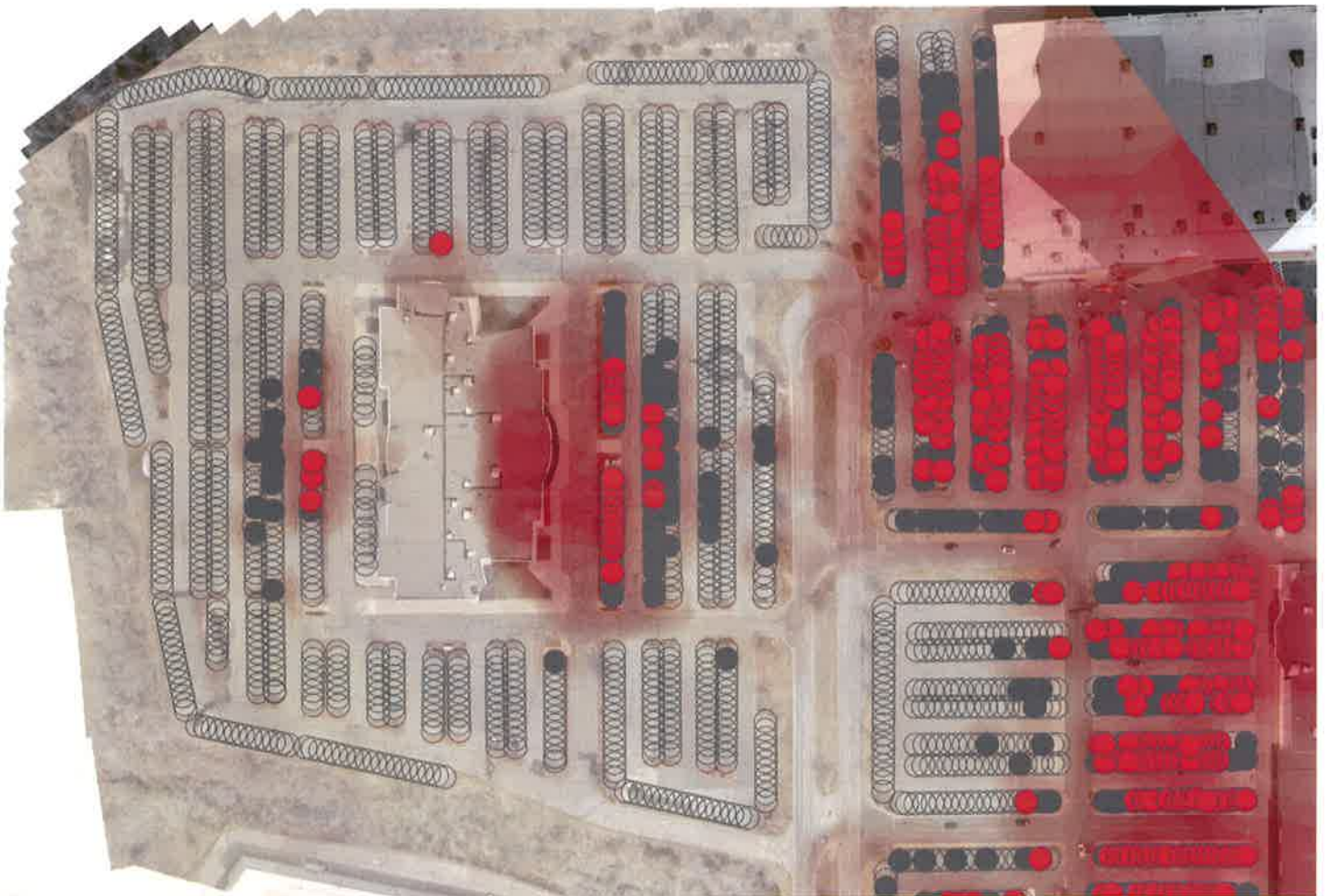
The survey gathered the following data:

- 3,842 total parking stalls
- 2,178 stalls unused on either day
- 849 stalls parked both days

- 1,434 stalls parked on Dec. 1, 2018 only
- 1,078 stalls parked on March 30, 2019 only

This plan also includes a basic “heat map” analysis (using ESRI’s ArcGIS) to visualize those areas where parking was in low demand. The purpose of these efforts was to identify opportunities for infill development, reduction in parking requirements in zoning bylaws, and other ways to buoy the existing Route 6 commercial corridor with more activity.

Communities across the nation are reducing or eliminating minimum parking requirements - even for retail areas. Allowing more infill development in existing commercial areas and reimagining the amount of physical space dedicated to surface parking are two clear ways to create more activity in existing retail centers. Seekonk should use these and similar future analyses to revisit requirements.



An image from Seekonk’s drone survey of parking at key retail facilities on Route 6. Analysis shows empty spaces (hollow circles), spaces parked during one of two surveys (grey circles), and spaces parked during both surveys (red circles). A “heat map” shows areas (in lighter shades) where infill development could likely occur. The full map series is available in the *Appendix* and at <https://XXXX>

Strategy 1-3: Don't reinvent the wheel - do what other successful communities have done.

Whether it's combatting vacancies, reducing minimum parking requirements, or pursuing other strategies to support existing retail corridors, Seekonk doesn't have to "go it alone." Cities and towns throughout the U.S. have already explored various methods to reinvigorate, diversify, and strengthen their retail centers. This section includes "case studies" that provide a menu of strategiesⁱ that town decision-makers can pursue in partnership with area business owners, institutions, and other stakeholders.

"Flipping the Strip"

<https://www.planning.org/planning/2016/apr/flippingthestrip/>

"After decades of unattractive, uncoordinated strip development, many retail corridors are losing economic vigor. Although all existing buildings, centers, and plazas will eventually be renovated or replaced, many of these strips will be rebuilt with only cosmetic improvements, perpetuating their original mistakes, unless local regulations are updated. However, progressive communities can seize such opportunities for fundamental change by setting new standards for redevelopment that incentivize or require these strips to evolve

ⁱ For example, the Town's Highway Business Zoning District (HBD), which dates from 1963 and covers the majority of the Route 6 retail corridor, does not allow multi-family dwelling units or continuing care facilities. This effectively prohibits mixed-use development that other communities have incentivized to bring activity to their retail corridors. Apartment, townhouse, condominium, large senior independent living facilities, and other housing uses could all be incentivized (or at least allowed by right) in the HBD. This could help create – and could be rebranded as – a truly mixed-use district that transforms the area's available surface area (much of it excess parking) with productive structures and activities. Building active structures in areas of excess parking would also create a more "human-scale" area. Numerous model bylaws are available for this effort. Many of these bylaws include density bonuses to incentivize certain site planning priorities such as pedestrian features, senior housing, or green infrastructure.

into mixed use districts with multistory buildings arranged in street-and-block fashion."

"The Future of the Strip?"

<https://urbanland.uli.org/economy-markets-trends/the-future-of-the-strip/>

"For more than 50 years, retailers have favored the commercial strip: a linear pattern of retail businesses strung along major roadways characterized by massive parking lots, big signs, boxlike buildings, and a total dependence on automobiles for access and circulation.

For years, planners have tried to contain and improve the strip. Now they are getting help from consumers and the marketplace. The era of strip development is slowly coming to an end. Evolving consumer behavior, changing demographics, high-priced gasoline, internet shopping, and the urbanization of the suburbs are all pointing to a new paradigm for commercial development.

Commercial strips are not going to disappear overnight, but it is becoming increasingly clear that strip retail is retail for the last century. The future belongs to town centers, main streets, and mixed-use development."

"Repositioning Urban Corridors"

<https://urbanland.uli.org/economy-markets-trends/repositioning-urban-corridors/>

"After the single-family detached house, nothing typifies the American suburb more than its arterial commercial corridors. These "in between" spaces of a city that connect activity centers are typically overlooked as places of new market opportunities. As a result, long-neglected corridors across the country are plagued with haphazard development patterns. Especially over the last two decades, city leaders and developers alike have focused on improving downtowns, creating new town centers, and adding lifestyle additions to malls. More often than not, the low-intensity, general commercial zoning along corridors has been untouched for years."



“Savvy developers, such as the one that worked on Zona Rosa, near Kansas City, Missouri, know that every dollar spent on amenities — such as trees, parks, and pop-up fountains — increase profitability through more frequent visits and greater time (and dollars) spent by customers.” Photo and Excerpt from “Flipping the Strip.”

“Crafting Authenticity for Retail Destinations”

<https://urbanland.uli.org/planning-design/crafting-authenticity-retail-destinations/>

“In reaction to the perceived homogeneity of suburban shopping malls and mass-produced goods, as well as the rise of the craft movement and the buy-local movement, many of today’s consumers want to shop in places that have a handcrafted or bespoke feel to them. Because big-box and internet retailers have captured the low-cost end of the retail spectrum, brick-and-mortar retail stores cannot compete on price, so they need to focus on offering unique environments and experiences if they are to remain relevant.”

“Solution File: Retrofitting Arterial Strip Centers in Austin, Texas”

<https://urbanland.uli.org/planning-design/solution-file-retrofitting-arterial-strip-centers-austin-texas/>

“There are thousands of retail strip centers, built along arterial streets in the 1950s through the 1970s, like the 8.5-acre (3.4 ha) former Lamar Plaza on South Lamar Boulevard, two miles (3 km) south of the heart of downtown Austin. Its original 1958 Handy Andy supermarket (later a Piggly Wiggly market) had already been turned into a six-screen Alamo Drafthouse cinema and restaurant in 2005. The former Beall’s Department Store had been converted into a Highball nightclub. But the other buildings on the underdeveloped site,

including retail and restaurant space and a small apartment building, were outdated. Its total on-site development constituted only a low suburban floor/area ratio (FAR) of 0.27 to 1, so that an increase to a still-low 2.7 FAR, even including suburban parking ratios, could support enough development to create urban values.”

Strategy 1-4: Fully support Goal 2 - Pursue transformative development envisioned for some “Big Box” sites along the Route 6 corridor.

Finally, as world-wide trends affecting bricks-and-mortar retail establishment continue to evolve, many communities are looking to truly transform their commercial corridors. This involves steps that go beyond simple “placemaking” or mixed-use infill envisioned above. Incentivizing office and institutional uses within retail corridors provides diversification and brings new consumers into the corridor. Goal 2 envisions this type of office park development at several locations along Route 6 (and one on Route 44). In addition to the analysis and strategies in Goal 2, the following “Big Box” transformations can provide clues for Seekonk moving forward. For more discussion - and presentation of the key sites - please see the next section, “Goal 2: Pursue high-value office park development in key locations in town.”

“Hamilton Place Sears to See Office Space in Makeover”

<https://www.timesfreepress.com/news/business/aroundregion/story/2018/dec/03/hamiltplace-sears-see-office-space-makeover/484240/>

“A mall developer wants to lease more than 62,000 square feet of planned office space in a vacant Sears in Chattanooga, Tennessee. The developer plans to remake the 150,000-square-foot store and its nearby parking lots into more of a town center.”

“Two University of Florida Office May Move into Sears”

<https://www.gainesville.com/news/20180607/two-uf-health-offices-may-move-into-sears>

“The University of Florida’s Health ophthalmology and otolaryngology departments will be consolidated into the vacant Sears building in the Oaks Mall in Gainesville, Florida. University officials intend to ‘gut and rebuild’ the space.”

“A Macy’s Goes from Mall Mainstay to Homeless Shelter”

<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/13/business/macys-homeless-shelter.html>

“A former Macy’s in a vacant shopping mall in Alexandria, Virginia has been transformed into a homeless shelter. The former store now provides 60 beds, hot meals and showers for families and for single men and women who are having trouble finding a place to live in a city with a scarcity of affordable housing.”

“Vanderbilt’s 100 Oaks clinics touted for convenience, comfort: Medical offices eyed as solution for aging malls”

https://www.atrdallas.com/pdfs/news_2009_09_11_NBJ.pdf

“By 2005, the mall was more than half empty, and the area immediately around One Hundred Oaks was in rough shape . . . developers saw the neighborhood’s growing potential and a tremendous opportunity for One Hundred Oaks as a mixed-use retail and office development. The project’s proximity to large, established neighborhoods and interstate access was also enticing to the developers . . . The new owners envisioned a transformation to a mixed office/retail development and hoped to truly revitalize the entire site. ”

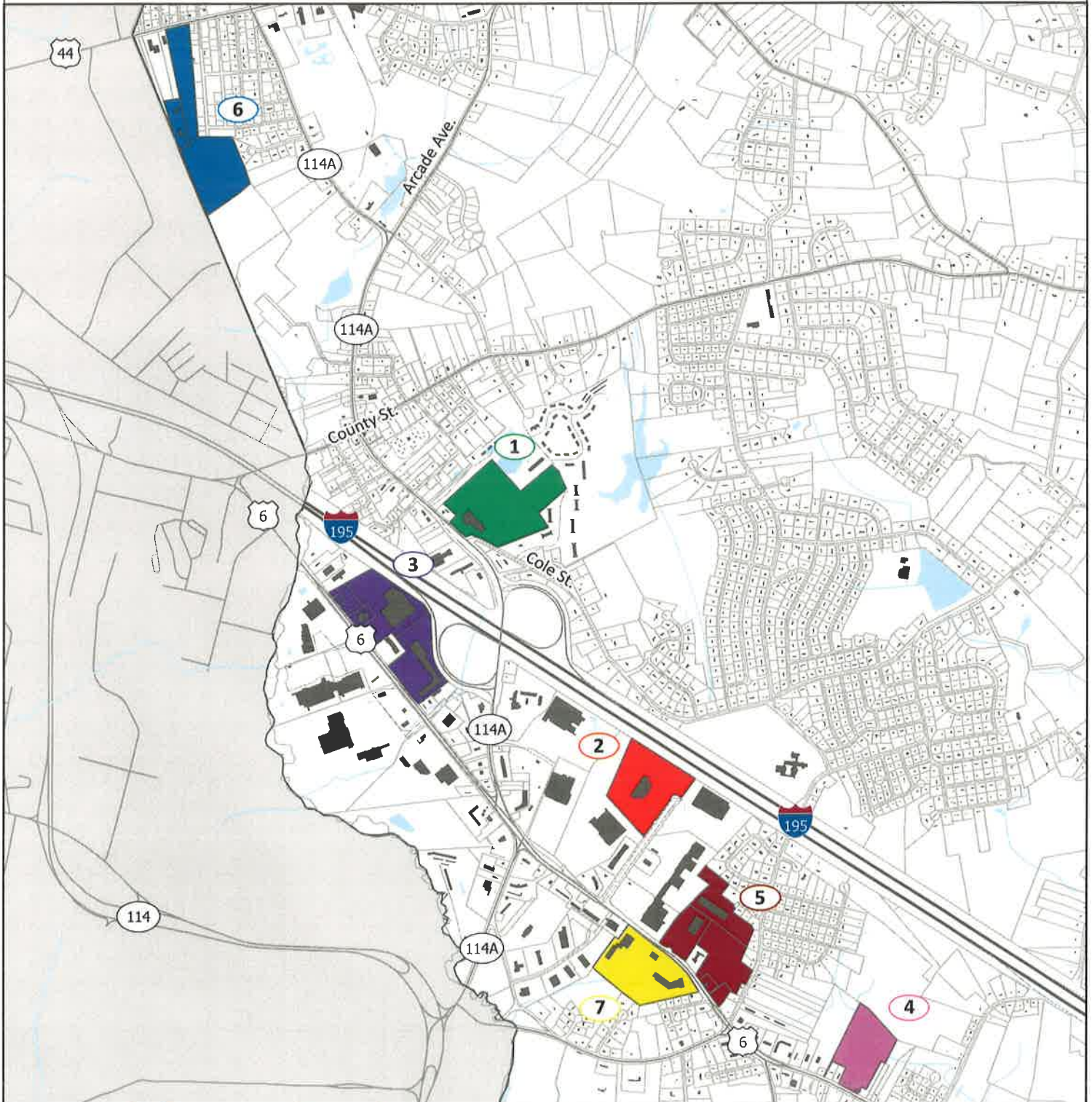
Sites for Goal 2: Pursue high-value office park development in key locations in Town



- 1. Showcase Cinema Site I
- 2. Showcase Cinema Site II
- 3. Highland Avenue Redevelopment Area
- 4. Former Swan Brook Site
- 5. Fantasyland Entertainment and Sherwood Sports
- 7. Taunton Avenue Industrial Area
- 7. Shops at Six Redevelopment

Data sources: Town of Seekonk, MassGIS and MassDOT.
This map is for the sole purpose of aiding regional decisions and is not warranted for any other use.

February 2019 0.25 Miles





Goal 2: Pursue high-value office park development in key locations in town.

Synthesis of Key Site Characteristics

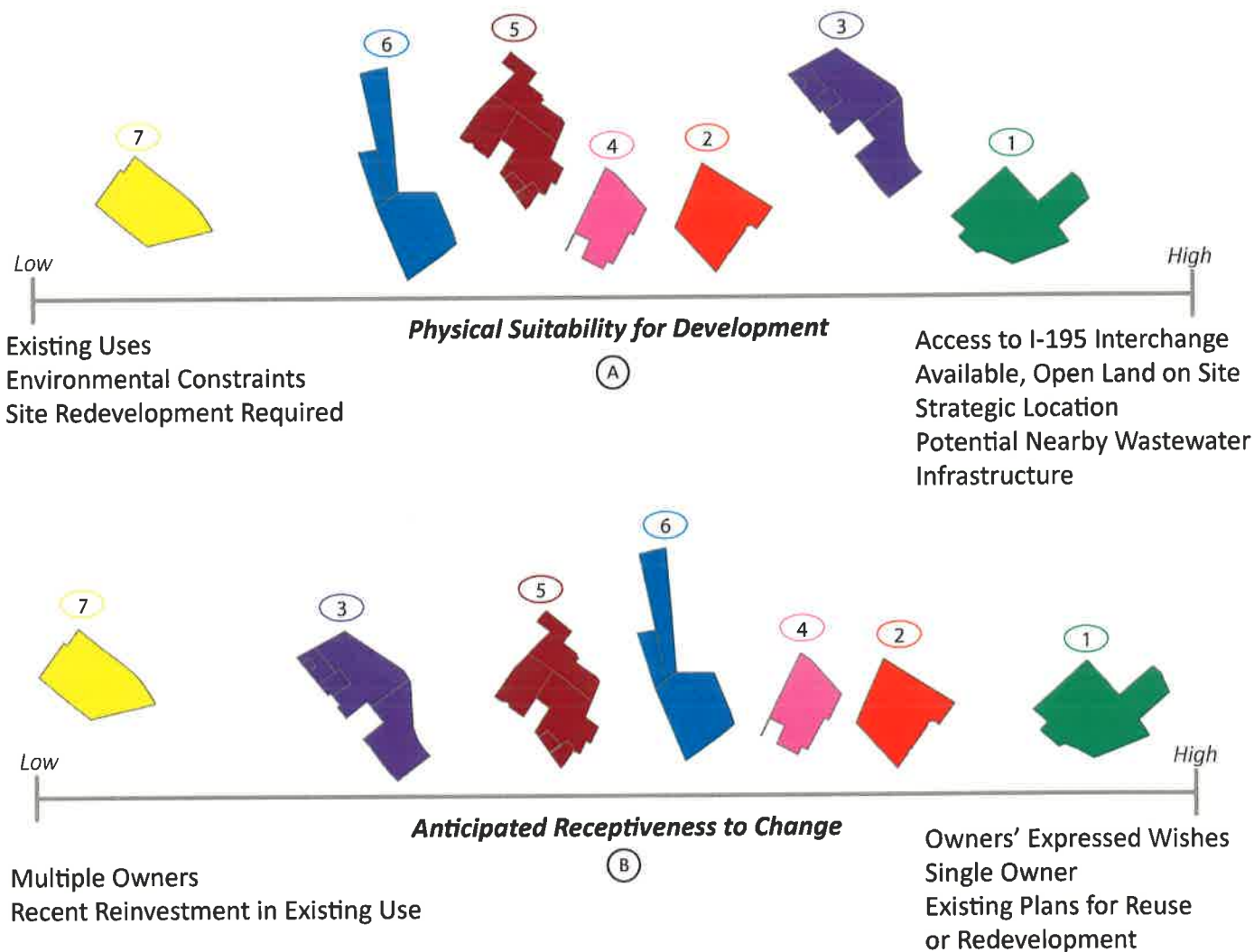
Based on numerous site visits, existing conditions mapping (available in the [Appendix](#)), and conversations with town officials, this plan identifies seven potential business park redevelopment sites. *These are depicted on the map on the preceding page.* Each location presents various challenges in terms of its existing uses, level of access, ownership patterns, and other characteristics.

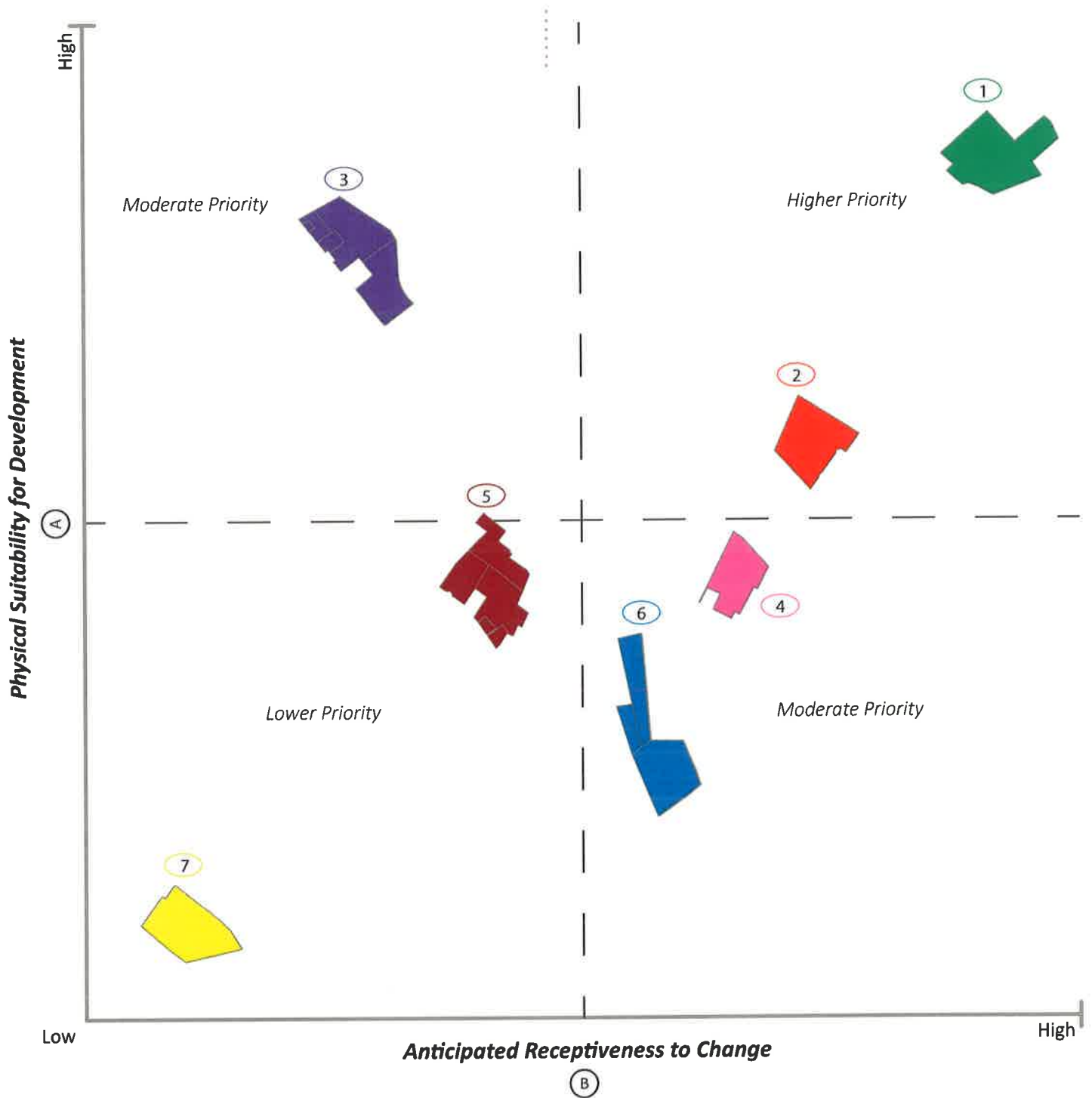
In an effort to summarize and understand the above characteristics, the project team identified two broad categories it used to rank and describe them: “Physical Suitability for Development” and “Anticipated Receptiveness to Change.” The team

scored each site on a spectrum from “Low” to “High,” as depicted in the diagram below. Sites characterized by low suitability/receptiveness are situated on the left side of the spectrum; sites with increasing suitability/receptiveness progress along the spectrum to the right. The various characteristics that determined placement are listed below their respective scores, “Low” and “High.”

Further, the graph to the right (imagine yourself back in a high school algebra class) combines these two measurements of suitability. It plots the identified redevelopment sites from “Low” to “High” to create an additional diagram that reveals why certain properties have higher priorities than others.

The above diagram is intended to serve as a simple

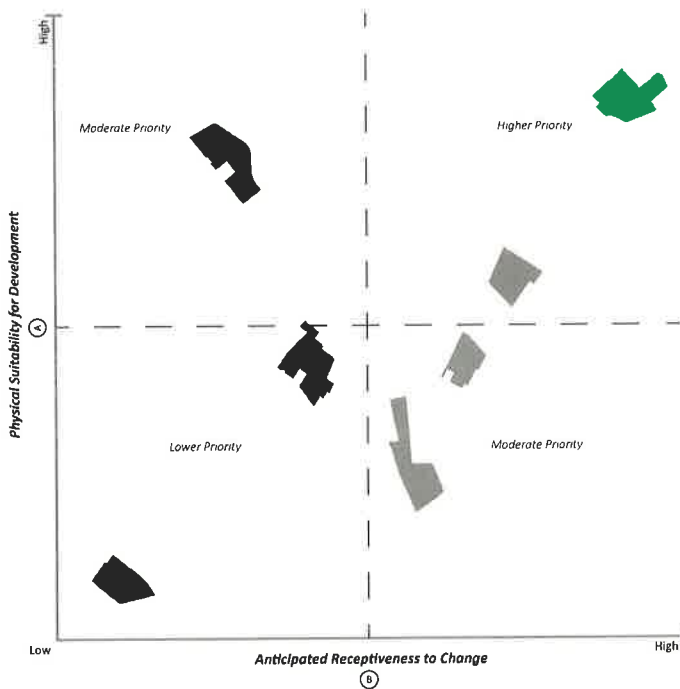




guide or a reminder to the reader as they consider the pros and cons of each site. Each of the seven site descriptions that follow include a version of this chart, as well as a drone image (taken in November of 2018), important site information, and proposed next steps for the town to pursue. Please note that many of the proposed near-term actions are similar across the sites due to Seekonk's relative lack of state program participation (such

as Chapter 43D Expedited Permitting) and key public infrastructure (such as necessary wastewater service). Nevertheless, each of these sites presents clear opportunity for economic development, either on an individual basis, or in concert with other efforts in this plan.

Site 2-1: Showcase Cinema Site I



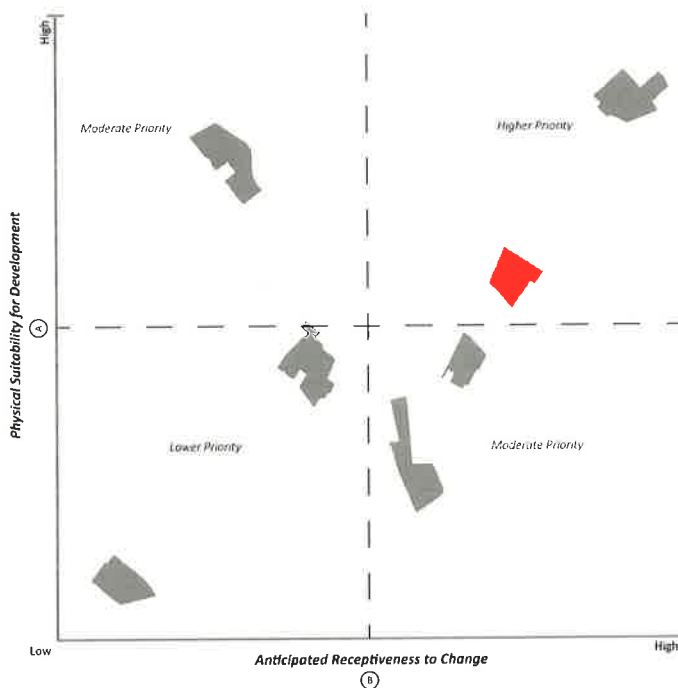
Actions/Next Steps

- In a renewed partnership with the property owner, Seekonk should actively pursue designating this site as a Chapter 43D priority development site (PDS).
- Potential development options to consider include mixed-use or medical office/business.
- Additional funding opportunities may be available under the MassDOT Complete Streets Program.
- Due to the existing building configuration, redevelopment should include demolition to maximize reuse of site.
- While wastewater service is likely a higher priority - and a higher likelihood - *Site 2-3: Highland Avenue Redevelopment Area*, the town should consult with the MassWorks Infrastructure Program to pursue roadway, water and/or sewer, drainage, and other infrastructure improvements coordinated with redevelopment and private investment.

Existing Conditions

- Acres: 22.0
- Number of Parcels: 1
- Built Space: 50,300 square feet
- Address: 800 Fall River Avenue
- Owner: National Amusements Inc.
- Current Use: Vacant Movie Theater
- Zoning: Highway Business

Site 2-2: Showcase Cinema Site II



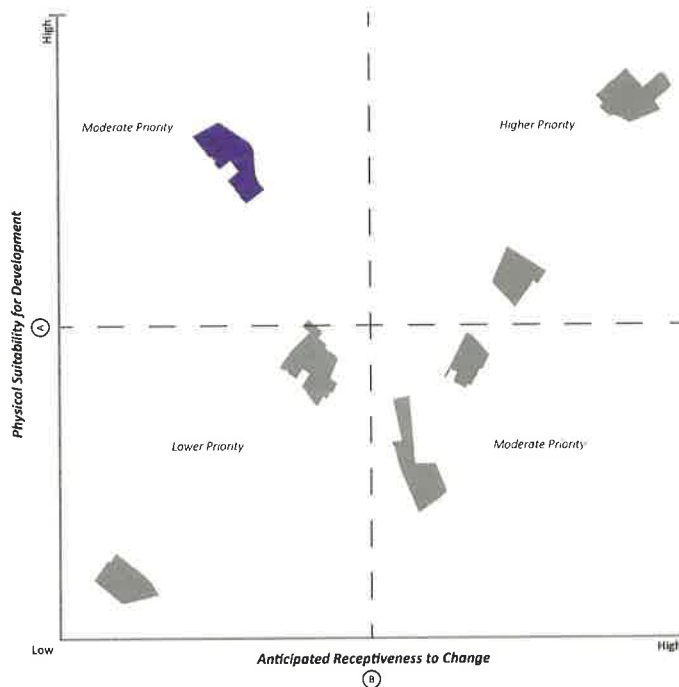
Actions/Next Steps

- As revealed in the parking analysis in Strategy 1-2, this site has significant surface area that could be transformed into active, productive uses, including more infill retail or mixed-use development.
- More than any other site in Goal 2, Showcase Cinema II could be reimagined as either simple infill or transformative development. Therefore, Seekonk can consider working with the property owner to test the entire “Reinvestment Toolbox” on this site (see page 19). In other words, in addition to adjusting zoning (to incentivize infill, allow greater densities and uses, and reduce limiting requirements), various other mechanisms can also position the area for reinvestment into both the site’s aesthetics and site planning, including improved features such as sidewalks, integrated transit facilities, and streetscaping. These types of improvements are particularly necessary for any mixed-use redevelopment scenarios that include on-site residents and their associated increase in activity. For more information on mixed-use options and public-private partnerships, please see the case studies in Strategy 1-3.
- The town should work with the owner to designate the site as a Chapter 43D PDS in order to explore scenarios, including medical or office redevelopment.

Existing Conditions

- Acres: 16.4
- Number of Parcels: 1
- Built Space: 53,299 square feet
- Address: 100 Commerce Way
- Owner: Nai Entertainment Holdings LLC
- Current Use: Movie Theater
- Zoning: Highway Business

Site 2-3: Highland Avenue Redevelopment Area



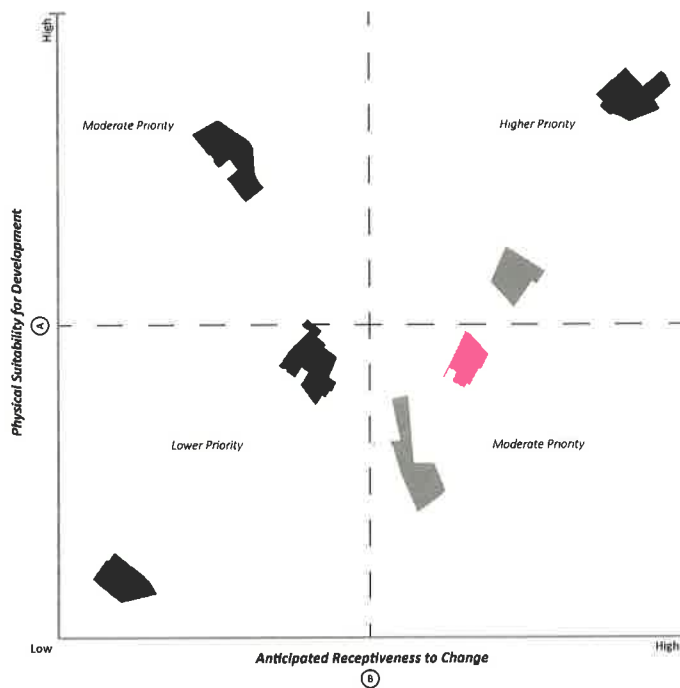
Actions/Next Steps

- This site is adjacent to East Providence, RI, where a main trunk sewer line ends at the town/state line. This site therefore presents a key “test case” for revisiting the prospect of negotiating an intermunicipal/interstate agreement for providing sewer service along the Route 6 corridor. ***Town leaders can use this plan to guide their efforts and to ensure that sewer service is clearly connected to economic development and commercial growth.*** (It is important to note that anecdotal evidence from Seekonk town officials indicate that numerous business opportunities have failed along the Route 6 corridor due to lack of sufficient wastewater service.)
- While intermunicipal negotiations are ongoing, the town should also consult with the MassWorks Infrastructure Program to pursue funding for sewer lines, drainage, and other infrastructure improvements.
- The site should also be designated a Chapter 43D PDS.

Existing Conditions

- Acres: 25.4
- Number of Parcels: 5
- Built Space: 248,584 square feet
- Address: 0, 80, 98, 100, and 150 Highland Avenue
- Owners: Highland Seekonk Realty, LLC, R & F Seekonk, LLC, and D’Angelo Inc
- Current Use: Commercial
- Zoning: Highway Business

Site 2-4: Former Swan Brook Site



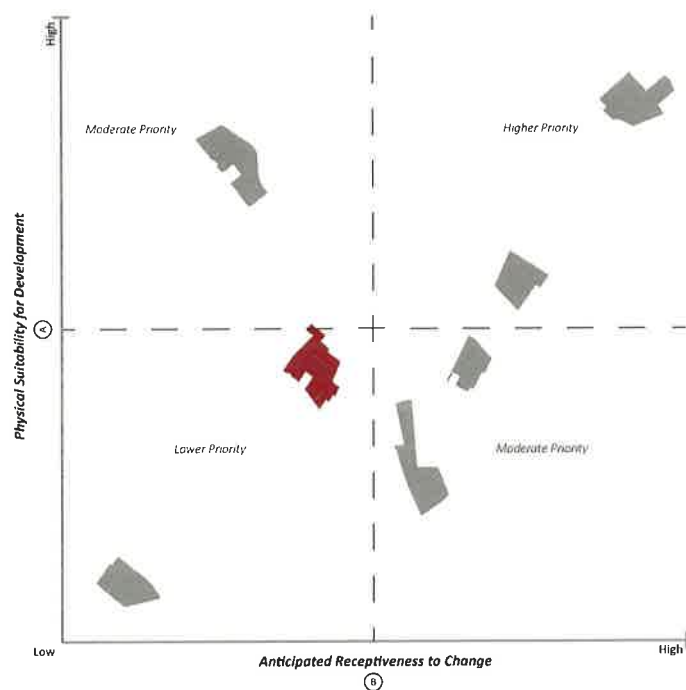
Actions/Next Steps

- Site 2-4 is somewhat removed from the core Route 6 commercial area. It nonetheless offers redevelopment opportunities.
- The site's split R-3 and R-4 zoning should be changed to either Local Business (LB) or to a future zoning district that results from this planning - one that reduces requirements, allows greater densities, and incentivizes desired site planning characteristics.

Existing Conditions

- Acres: 12.1
- Number of Parcels: 1
- Built Space: 1,496 square feet
- Address: 1530 Fall River Avenue
- Owner: His Providence Church
- Current Use: Vacant/Underutilized Residential/Commercial Use
- Zoning: Residential 3 and 4

Site 2-5: Fantasyland and Sherwood Sports



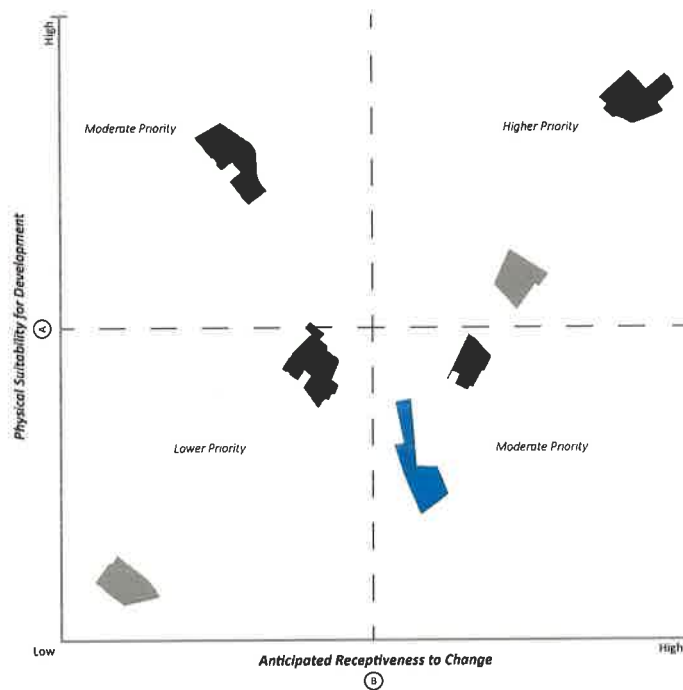
Actions/Next Steps

- Strategies for this site are similar to those for Site 2-1. In a renewed partnership with the property owner, Seekonk should actively pursue designating this site as a Chapter 43D priority development site (PDS).
- Potential development options to consider include mixed-use or medical office/business.
- Additional funding opportunities may be available under the MassDOT Complete Streets Program.
- Due to the existing building configuration, redevelopment should include demolition to maximize reuse of the site.
- While wastewater service is likely a higher priority - and a higher likelihood - on *Site 2-3: Highland Avenue Redevelopment Area*, the town should consult with the MassWorks Infrastructure Program to pursue roadway, water and/or sewer, drainage, and other infrastructure improvements coordinated with redevelopment and private investment.

Existing Conditions

- Acres: 23.0
- Number of Parcels: 5
- Built Space: 92,228 square feet
- Address: 1300, 1314, 1338, 1350, and 1370 Fall River Avenue
- Owners: Antone and Sylvia Oliveira
- Current Use: Commercial
- Zoning: Highway Business

Site 2-6: Taunton Avenue Industrial Area



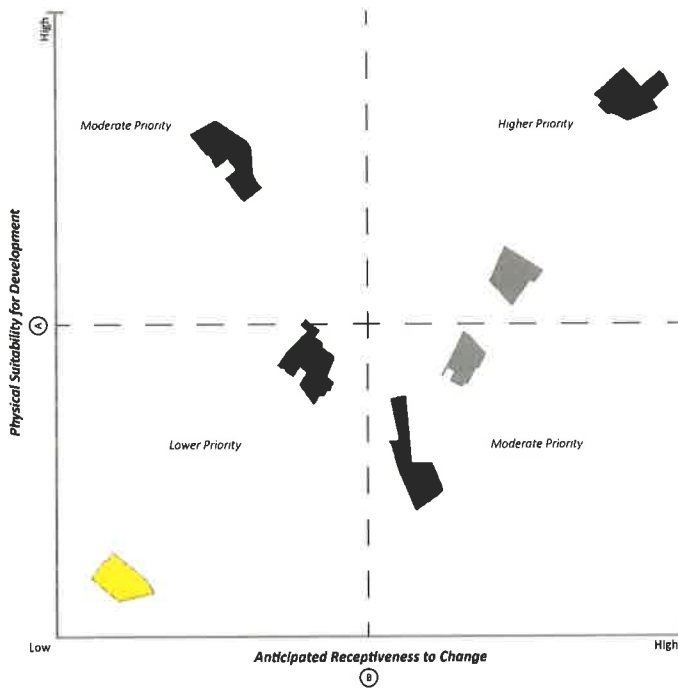
Actions/Next Steps

- This site is one of the few large parcels remaining in town that has good highway access and is well suited for industrial uses. (It contains/is adjacent to an existing gravel operation accessed from Commercial Way in East Providence, RI.)
- The site's split zoning should be changed to be only Industrial.
- The site should also be considered for a Chapter 43D PDS.

Existing Conditions

- Acres: 23.6
- Number of Parcels: 3
- Built Space: 0 square feet
- Address: 0 Taunton Avenue
- Owner: Lynch Corp and Seekonk Acres LLC
- Current Use: Commercial and Industrial
- Zoning: Highway Business and Industrial

Site 2-7: Shops at Six Redevelopment



Actions/Next Steps

- Monitor for vacancies.
- Consider rezoning or Chapter 43D PDS designation should efforts to acquire sewer service along the corridor be successful.

Existing Conditions

- Acres: 17.6
- Number of Parcels: 1
- Built Space: 102,015 square feet
- Address: 1275 Fall River Avenue
- Owner: 1275 Fall River Ave LLC
- Current Use: Shopping Center
- Zoning: Highway Business

Overview of Main Strategies for Goal 2

Many of the redevelopment strategies mentioned in each site profile come from the traditional economic development “toolbox” in Massachusetts. They are described in more detail here.

Chapter 43D Expedited Permitting

The Massachusetts Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development (EOHED) Chapter 43D program should be used to designate these sites for local expedited permitting. The program is enabled by M.G.L.c. 43D and “provides a transparent and efficient process for municipal permitting, guarantees local permitting decisions on priority development sites within 180 days, [and] increases visibility of your community and target development site(s).”ⁱⁱ The program also provides “(1) priority consideration for the MassWorks Infrastructure Program grants, brownfields remediation assistance, and other financing through quasi-public organizations, (2) online marketing of your site and promotion of your pro-business regulatory climate, (3) improved municipal planning and permitting efficiencies, [and] (4) collection of special fees for priority development site permit applications.”ⁱⁱⁱ The process for participating in Chapter 43D involves two steps. First, Seekonk must identify eligible sites and obtain the written buy-in of all affected property owners. Next, participation requires a successful Town Meeting vote to approve the site and to accept the program’s provisions, including the creation of a Chapter 43D-specific permitting guide; this Economic Development Plan and a supporting civic engagement effort by the Planning Board can facilitate Town Meeting approval.

Below is a summary of typical series of “next steps” needed to participate in Chapter 43D. The Seekonk Planning Board, under the direction of the Town

ⁱⁱ Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development (EOHED) Chapter 43D Program <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/chapter-43d-expedited-local-permitting>

ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid.

Administrator and Board of Selectmen, should be the responsible parties for these actions.

1. Initiate contact and discussions with key property owners and commercial real estate representatives to secure participation in redevelopment efforts outlined in this report;
2. Secure buy-in and participation of key property owners to designate eligible PDS under Chapter 43D Expedited Streamlined Permitting;
3. Promote and market PDS to attract private investment, encourage new development, create employment opportunities and generate tax revenue; and
4. Leverage project(s) and private investment to pursue public infrastructure improvements along the Route 6 Corridor under the MassWorks Infrastructure Improvement Program, the MassDOT Complete Streets Program, or the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

Utilize the “Reinvestment Toolbox” – Public-Private Partnerships, District Improvement Financing (DIF), and Tax Increment Financing (TIF)

Communities across Massachusetts have created specialized public-private partnerships and participated in betterment programs to serve the specific needs of their economy and special areas in town. For example, some communities create formal, ongoing committees that meet with existing businesses to discuss how the town can help them retain employees, remain in operation, or expand in desirable ways. This type of public-private partnership may be particularly important when working with Seekonk’s largest businesses.

Other towns participate in DIF or TIF Enhancement Funds that actively gather revenues to make capital or service improvements to specific areas in town. For example, once Seekonk identifies one or more business partners that can advance specific projects on one of the above sites, the Town can work with the Massachusetts Office of Business

Development (MOBD) to implement Tax Increment Financing (TIF) under the Economic Development Incentive Program (EDIP). TIF is authorized by M.G.L.c. 40§59; it is “a local real estate property tax exemption negotiated and executed between a host municipality and an expanding or relocating company. The business must create new employment opportunities and make significant private investment that increases the base assessed value of the property as the tax abatement is given only on the incremental increase in the property value.”^{iv} Once the tax abatement expires, the Town collects all applicable property taxes. This strategy has been employed to attract businesses to towns across Massachusetts.

Secure wastewater service for the Route 6 Commercial Corridor

Wastewater infrastructure is a key public sector ingredient to any large scale economic development. Seekonk currently lacks any public sewer. However, as this plan notes above, Site 2-3 is adjacent to East Providence, RI, where a main trunk sewer line ends at the town/state line. This site therefore presents a key “test case” for revisiting the prospect of negotiating an intermunicipal/interstate agreement for providing sewer service along the Route 6 corridor.

Using the following general steps, Town leaders can use this plan to guide their efforts and to ensure that sewer service is clearly connected to commercial growth in Seekonk:

- Secure consensus on redevelopment recommendations with appropriate municipal Departments, Boards, and Commissions.
- Initiate preliminary meetings with property owners to determine both near- and long-term

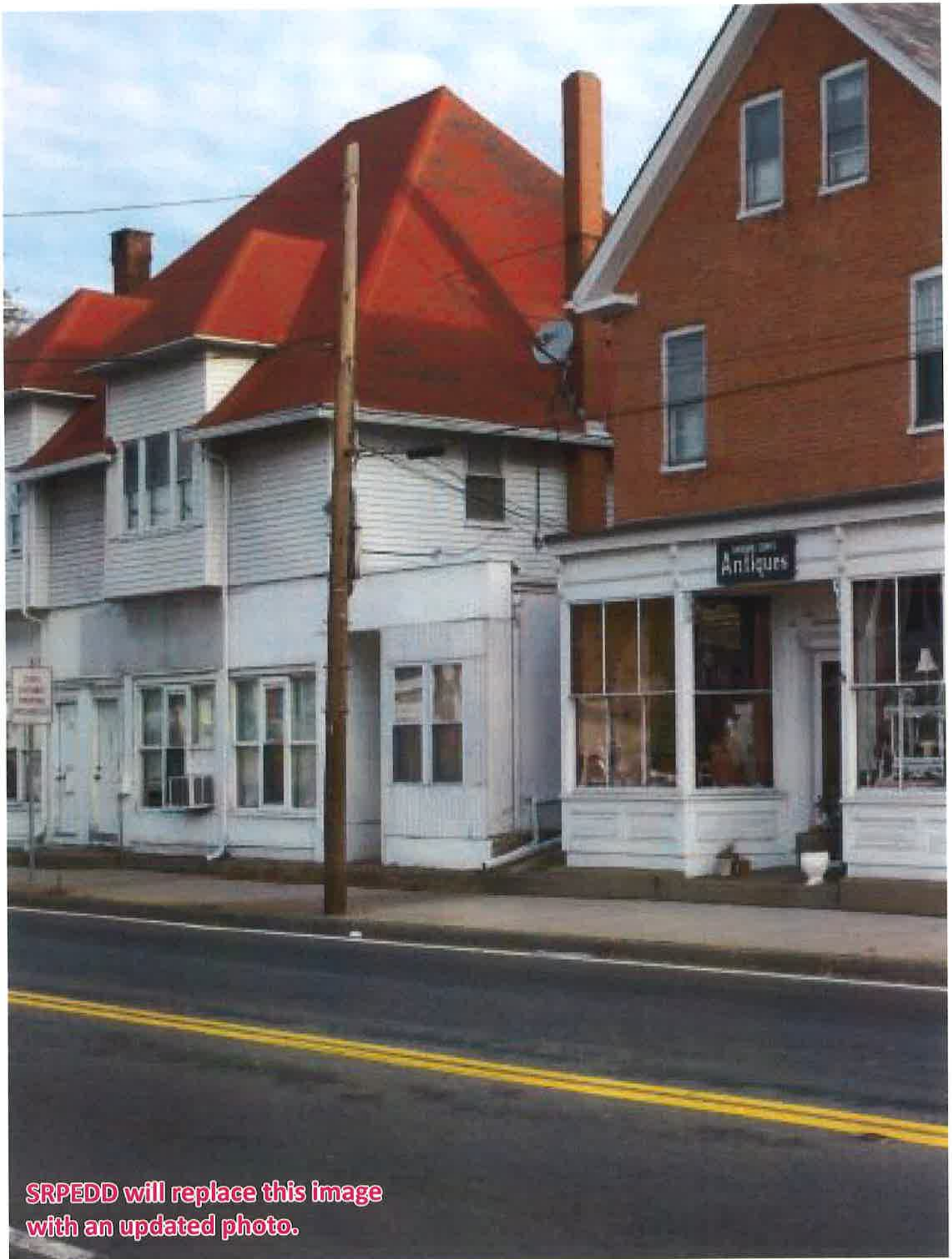
plans and to encourage potential interest in redevelopment opportunities.

- Circulate this plan to commercial real estate development companies experienced in office/business park development in order to promote and attract interest for redevelopment potential.
- Collaborating with all of the above partners, investigate potential extension of existing sewer line, determine the format and details of an intermunicipal agreement (IMA) as well as the amount of sewer capacity available for purchase from East Providence. (Please also see the subset of actions to support an East Providence IMA, below.)
- Simultaneously pursue Chapter 43D designation to provide development incentives, streamlined permitting, priority for infrastructure funding, and free marketing through EOHED.

The following is a subset of actions to pursue in support of an IMA to procure sewer service through East Providence, RI.

- Seek legislative support to assist in negotiations from both House and Senate representatives in MA and RI.
- Identify other existing IMAs that Seekonk has with East Providence that maybe used to inform the negotiations (water supply and/or storage, landfills, waste transfer station, open space, or other IMAs).
- Analyze and evaluate potential revenue sharing agreement with East Providence based on projections of incremental tax growth generated by extension of sewer.
- Secure support of existing businesses located in the Route 6 commercial corridor and from the East Providence Chamber of Commerce to lobby City of East Providence for extension.

^{iv} EOHED TIF Program <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/smart-growth-smart-energy-toolkit-modules-district-improvement-financing-diftax>



SRPEDD will replace this image
with an updated photo.

Goal 3: Encourage mixed-use development in Luther's and Baker's Corners.

Mixed-use development is another piece of the puzzle

On page 1, this plan acknowledges that there is no one “silver bullet” for economic development. Towns such as Seekonk must therefore pursue a variety of strategies to compete in the regional economy, to build on existing strengths, and to address any weaknesses. To that end, Town decision-makers chose to include a section that focuses on the role that mixed-use development can play in Seekonk's economic vitality. By seeking to encourage mixed-uses, the town intends primarily to build on its strengths - in other words, it hopes to create vibrant, walkable neighborhoods that attract educated, relatively affluent people who want to work and live in town, benefiting from a diversity of amenities and from Seekonk's relatively affordable home prices.^v Moreover, Seekonk intends to focus these efforts to its two existing mixed-use nodes, Baker's Corner and Luther's Corner.

Baker's Corner

Of the two primary mixed-use nodes in Seekonk, Baker's Corner has the most potential, demonstrated in the following SWOT (“Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats”) Analysis:

Strengths

- Fixed-route bus service to the Attleboro MBTA Commuter Rail Station via GATRA's #16 Seekonk/Attleboro route.
- Existing businesses anchored by Stop & Shop

^v For more information on these socioeconomic conditions, please see pages 1 and 2 of this report, its [Appendix](#), or the interactive data page at www.srpedd.org/Seekonk-ED-Data.

and CVS.

- Existing sidewalks and pedestrian amenities.

Weaknesses

- Lack of municipal **water** and sewer infrastructure.
- Despite its connection to the Attleboro MBTA station, Baker's Corner is somewhat removed from existing civic amenities in Seekonk.

Opportunities

- Nearby, Central Plaza is located less than 0.5 miles east of Baker's Corner.
- Densely populated Pawtucket, RI is an adjacent market.
- Potential redevelopment of existing low intensity uses, such as Countryside Motors, Landry's Liquors, Good Seed, Seekonk Country Store, and H&R Block plaza.
- A large redevelopment site, Attleboro Dye Works, is less than 0.5 miles northeast of Baker's Corner. This site is in the process of being acquired by the town for brownfield remediation.
- At the time of this report, multiple properties are for sale, including 124 Central Avenue.

Threats

- Area traffic can be fast and congested.

Baker's Corner Context



- Interstates
- Collectors and Arterials
- Local Roads
- Structures
- Parcels
- Water

Data sources: Town of Seekonk, MassGIS and MassDOT.
This map is for the sole purpose of aiding regional decisions and is not warranted for any other use.

May 2019

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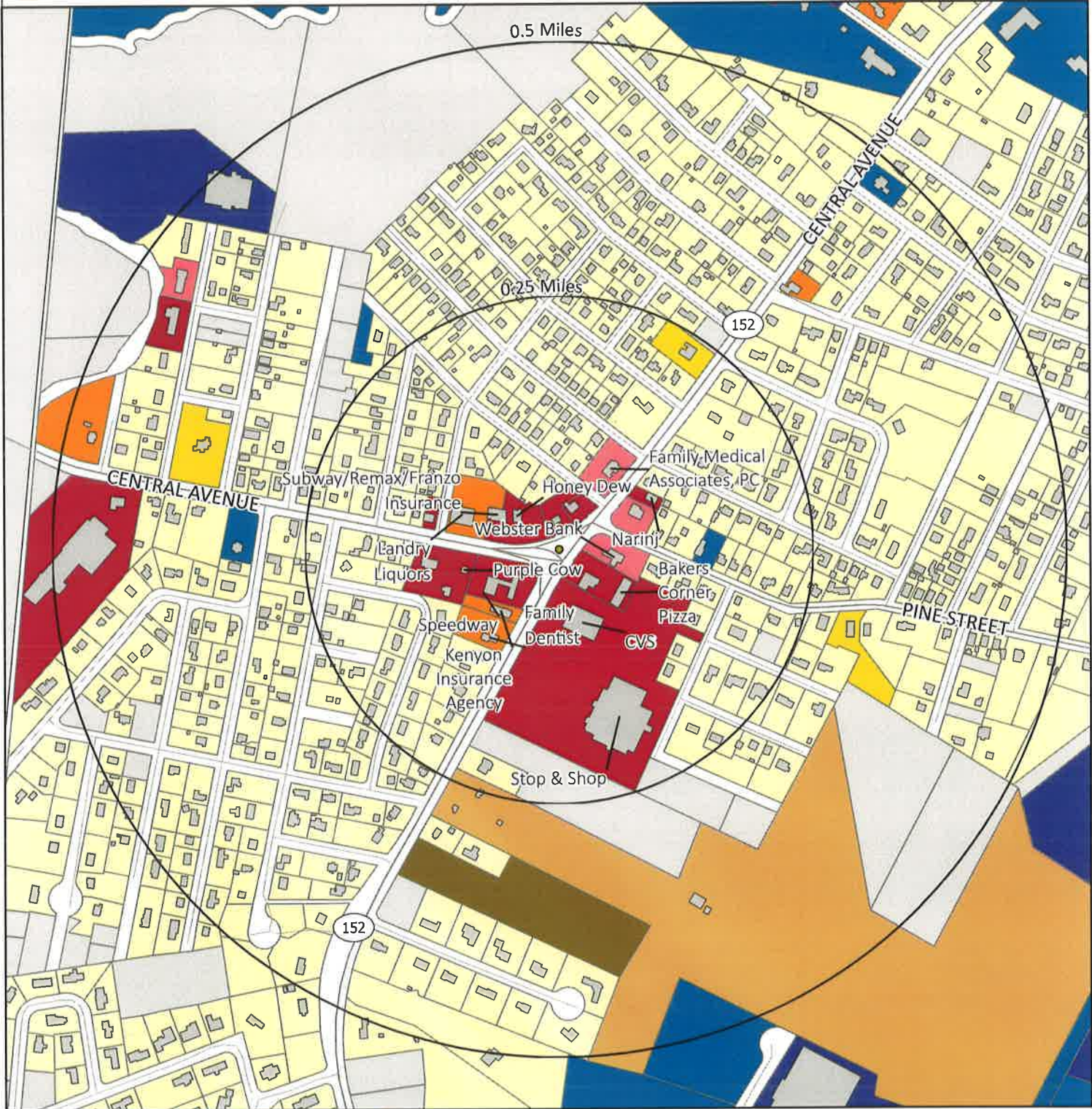


Baker's Corner Land Use

- | | | |
|-----------------------|----------------|--------------------------|
| Residences <= 3 units | Open Space | Interstates |
| Apartments >= 4 units | Transportation | Collectors and Arterials |
| Mixed-Use | Vacant | Local Roads |
| Office | No Data | Structures |
| Commercial | Parcels | Water |
| Industrial | | |
| Institutional | | |
| Res/Ag and Res/OS | | |
| Agriculture | | |

Data sources: Town of Seekonk, MassGIS and MassDOT.
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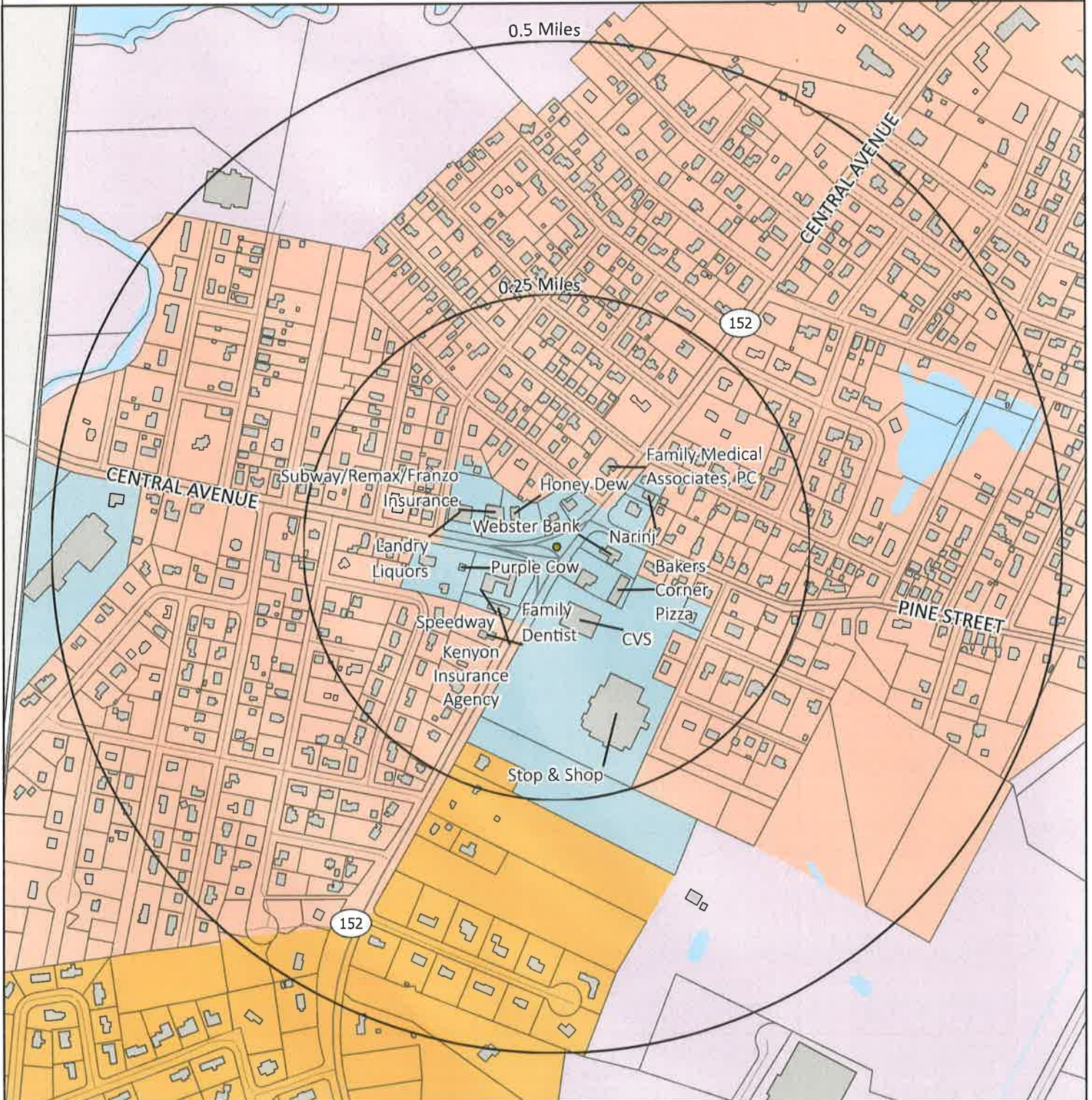
Baker's Corner Zoning



- | | |
|---|---|
| R-1 | Interstates |
| R-2 | Collectors and Arterials |
| R-3 | Local Roads |
| R-4 | Structures |
| Highway Business | Parcels |
| Industrial | Water |
| Local Business | |
| Planned Unit Development | |
| Luther's Corners Village District | |

Data sources: Town of Seekonk, MassGIS and MassDOT.
This map is for the sole purpose of aiding regional decisions and is not warranted for any other use.

May 2019 0.1 Miles ↑



Luther's Corner

According to Section 4.1.2.5 of Seekonk's Zoning Bylaw, "this district represents a pocket of traditional village style development, which provides a significant opportunity to bolster access for all residents to local goods and services." While Luther's Corner does resemble a traditional neighborhood node^{vi}, it has more constraints and fewer clear mixed-use opportunities than Baker's Corner. Despite this, Luther's Corner - and its existing mixed-use zoning - offer opportunities to encourage future development that help to meet the Town's economic development goals.

Strengths

- Seekonk Commons (a Housing Authority property) is located adjacent to the area.
- The Luther's Corner Village District bylaw, which encourages the historic character of the neighborhood, is an existing resource.
- Existing sidewalks and pedestrian amenities.

Weaknesses

- Perceived lack of on-street, public parking.
- Lack of municipal **water** and sewer infrastructure.
- Low-intensity commercial uses (e.g. auto school, and antique store) are in the area.
- Lack of "destination" businesses.
- Low foot-traffic area.

Opportunities

- Vacant storefronts.
- Low-intensity businesses.
- Underutilized building stock has mixed-use/re-use potential.

Threats

- Area traffic can be fast and congested.

- The strength of the nearby Route 6 commercial market may inhibit commercial growth in Luther's Corner.

Overview of Main Strategies for Goal 3

Strategies to encourage and support mixed-use development are described here.

MassDOT Complete Streets Funding Program

One of the main characteristics of a truly walkable, mixed-use district are "Complete Streets." Complete Streets are roadways that safely and comfortably accommodate all users, regardless of age and ability or mode of transportation. Complete Streets components can include roadway design features, such as ADA compliant sidewalks and crossings, curb extensions, bicycle lanes, shared use pavement markings, bus shelters and pull-outs, wayfinding signage, landscaping, street lighting, and many other items. According to the MassDOT Complete Streets Funding Program's Guidance, "The design of a Complete Street should be context sensitive and incorporate improvements or treatments that fit the need and with the character of a community."^{vii}

Modern engineering and planning practices, including the MassDOT Complete Streets initiative and the Community Compact Cabinet, have come to acknowledge the merits of more traditional and multimodal circulation systems – particularly in village centers. Moreover, these transportation investments dovetail and support related zoning initiatives that encourage small building setbacks and moderate building heights - features of the built environment that slow down driving behavior. Seekonk should participate in the MassDOT

^{vii} Please see www.mass.gov/complete-streets-funding-program and www.srpedd.org/Complete-Streets for more information.

^{vi} See <http://www.srpedd.org/traditional-neighborhoods>

Luther's Corner Context



- Interstates
- Collectors and Arterials
- Local Roads
- Structures
- Parcels
- Water

Data sources: Town of Seekonk, MassGIS and MassDOT.
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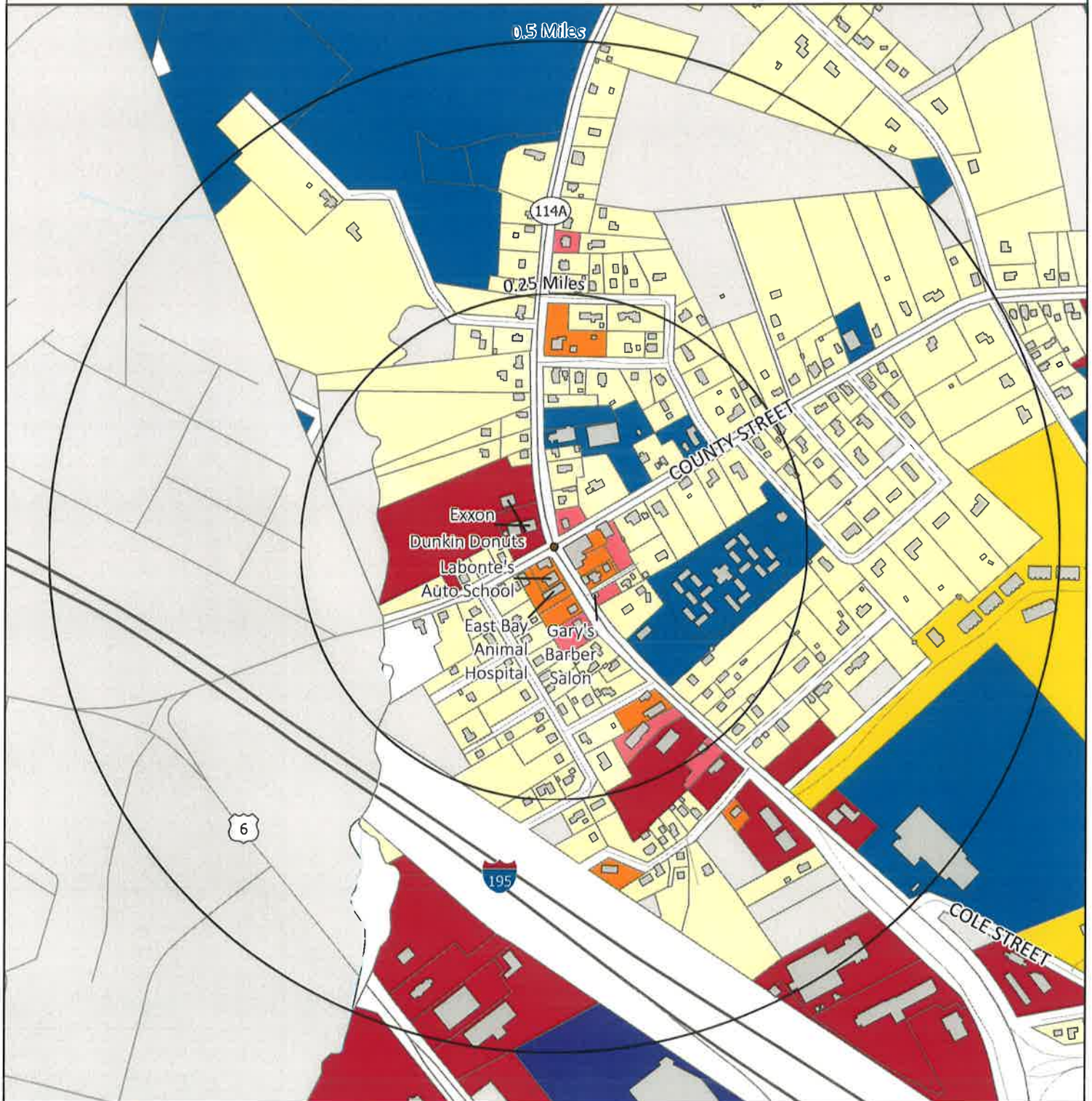
Luther's Corner Land Use



- | | | |
|-----------------------|----------------|--------------------------|
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| Apartments >= 4 units | Transportation | Collectors and Arterials |
| Mixed-Use | Vacant | Local Roads |
| Office | No Data | Structures |
| Commercial | | Parcels |
| Industrial | | Water |
| Institutional | | |
| Res/Ag and Res/OS | | |
| Agriculture | | |

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Luther's Corner Zoning

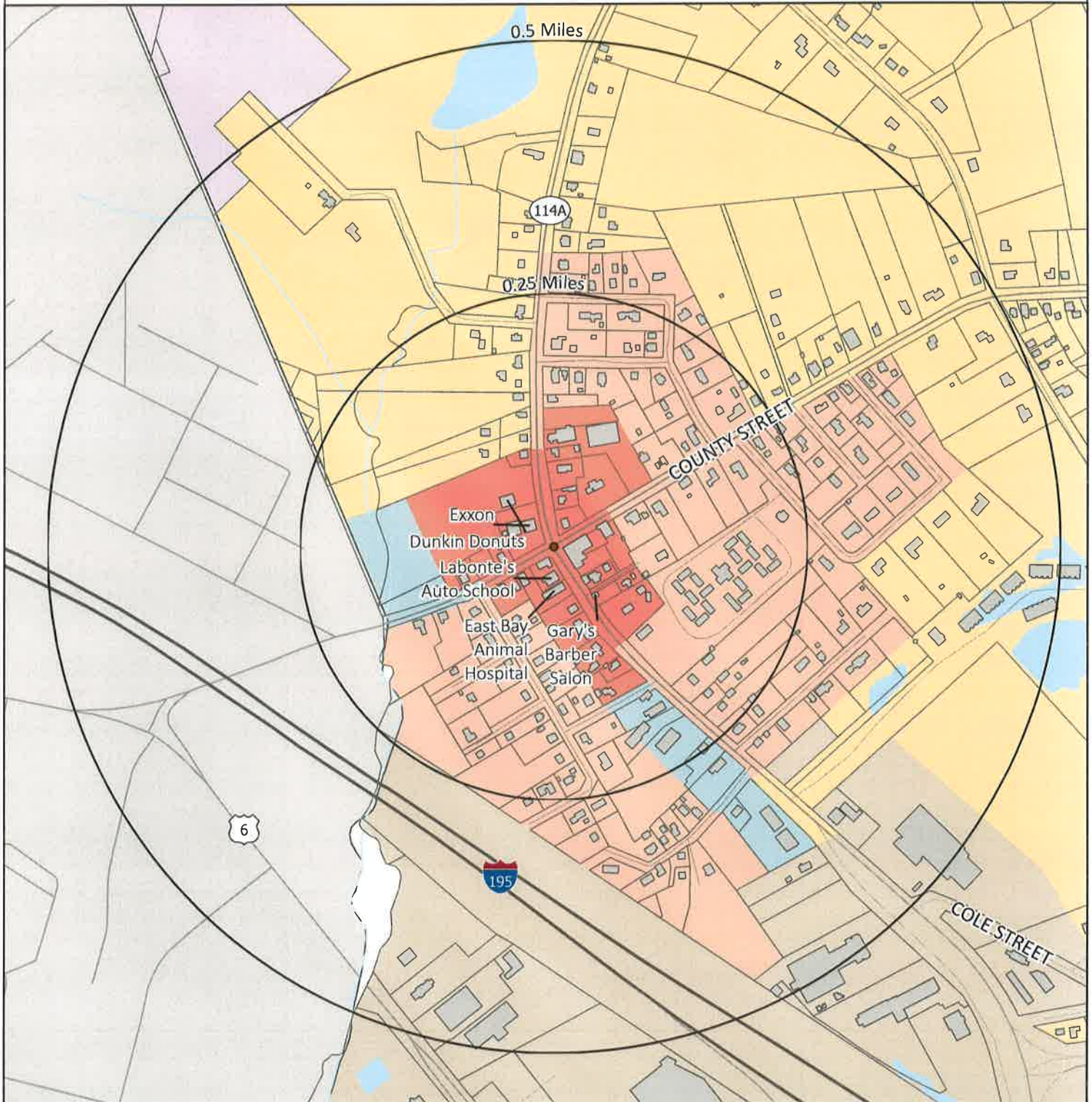


- R-1
- R-2
- R-3
- R-4
- Highway Business
- Industrial
- Local Business
- Planned Unit Development
- Luther's Corners Village District

- Interstates
- Collectors and Arterials
- Local Roads
- Structures
- Parcels
- Water

Data sources: Town of Seekonk, MassGIS and MassDOT.
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May 2019 0.1 Miles ↑



Complete Streets program, identifying Baker's and Luther's Corners in the Town's Prioritization Plan." Program participation makes the town eligible for up to \$400,000 of construction funding and up to \$35,000 of technical assistance. Numerous towns across Massachusetts have made key public realm, Complete Streets improvements in order to support mixed-use development in desired locations.

Revisit Seekonk's existing mixed-use zoning bylaws

In terms of pursuing mixed-use development, Seekonk "has a leg up" on many communities; this is because the town already has two "mixed-use" zoning bylaws - the "Luther's Corners Village District" and the "Mixed-Use Overlay District. The Luther's Corner District in particular includes truly modest dimensional and use requirements that result in traditional mixed-use, village style development envisioned in the districts "purpose."^{viii} The town's zoning also has important "supplemental" features such as Section 8.11 (Additional Site Plan Standards for the Local Business District, Mixed Use Overlay District and Luther's Corners Village District) and Section 8.6.1 (Architectural Guidelines for). Moreover, these bylaws share many features of other successful mixed-use bylaws in nearby and neighboring communities.

Even with these many advantages, Seekonk should consider revisiting and making improvements to these districts based on features of other zoning bylaws that have created successful mixed-use growth in suburban contexts. Subjects for further study include:

- **Incentives:** For example, in neighboring Barrington, RI, the zoning bylaw reduces requirements, including dimensional standards, for providing Low- and Moderate-Income Housing (including specific Mixed-Use

^{viii} "This district represents a pocket of traditional village style development, which provides a significant opportunity to bolster access for all residents to local goods and services." - Section 4.1.2.3 of Seekonk's Zoning Bylaw.

Commercial provisions).^{ix} Other incentives for qualifying mixed-use projects can include reduction in parking requirements, providing streamlined permitting, or even density bonuses.

- **Design Guidelines:** Design guidelines use images and text to describe numerous site and building characteristics ranging from architecture and materials to site planning and stormwater management (LID); in so doing, they provide clear and predictable expectations for development in certain areas (such as Luther's or Baker's Corner) or under certain conditions. Guidelines are typically included in Planning Board Rules and Regulations governing Site Plan Review. The Planning Board can adopt and subsequently amend design guidelines at public hearings. Numerous municipalities, such as nearby Westport or Dennisport on Cape Cod^x have example guidelines that can be adapted to meet Seekonk's needs and guide development.^{xi}
- **Expand and Standardize:** The Luther's Corner Village District contains superior dimensional standards and use regulations that could be applied not only to the existing Mixed-Use Overlay District, but also when creating a new Baker's Corner Mixed-Use Zoning District.

^{ix} Please note that Barrington's Route 114/103 Corridor saw a true "mixed-use," "village character" transformation in the late 1990s/early 2000s thanks changes in the zoning ordinance, addition of design standards, and "Complete Street"-style roadway improvements.

^x <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/case-studies-traditional-neighborhood-development-tnd>

^{xi} It is also important to note that Design Guidelines can improve visual street appeal, minimize entry/exit points on Route 114A or Route 152, create more usable internal circulation on parcels (including pedestrian and bike access), and encourage high-quality development that increase the local tax base.

Pursue a transformative development at Attleboro Dye Works or other underutilized sites

Transformative, “example” projects can be key to catalyzing development in a given area. This can particularly be true for “jump starting” new mixed-use nodes.

Even though the Attleboro Dye Works property is just outside of Baker’s Corner, this site could be key to transforming the area should it be successfully redeveloped. At the time of this plan, the Town anticipates that it will take possession of the contaminated property due to outstanding taxes. The property is currently being assessed to establish the extent of contamination and necessary remediation.

Working through programs such as MassDevelopment Brownfields Redevelopment Fund and the MassDOR Brownfields Tax Credit Program, Seekonk should clean the site. Then, working with local and regional partners through an RFP process, the town should identify a range of redevelopment scenarios that meet both its overall goals for economic development and its desire to bring a mix of uses to Baker’s Corner.^{xii}

^{xii} For more information on programs for brownfields assistance, please see <https://www.mass.gov/files/documents/2017/10/17/Brownfield%20Resource%20Guide%202013.pdf>

Implementation Matrix

Guidance for moving forward

Implementation helps a plan become a living, breathing document. It takes the Town’s ideas and puts them into action. This plan’s organization is designed for implementation; it proposes “Goals” and immediately lists the “Strategies” and “Sites” needed to make them happen.

This plan also includes an **Implementation Matrix** that presents each of the document’s main Goals and Strategies in a user-friendly table. It clearly lists main steps, responsible parties, state and federal support programs, resources required, partnerships needed, and performance measures. It is designed to be a quick reference resource (ideally used electronically, in spreadsheet form or online at <https://XXXX>) for town officials and employees as you work with the citizens of Seekonk and local, regional, and state partners to implement this plan.